



January 8, 2016

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## Growing Aquaculture in Wisconsin

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This session, I've had the privilege to be the chairman of the Senate Committee on Sporting Heritage, Mining and Forestry. On Tuesday of this week, the committee held a hearing. One of the bills that was heard during the public hearing was Senate Bill 493 (SB 493). I authored this bill with Representative Mary Czaja to help the aquaculture industry grow in Wisconsin.

Aquaculture is a very interesting and diverse industry. Wisconsin's aquaculture industry dates all the way back to 1856. Today, fish farmers in Wisconsin grow fish to stock our lakes, fill our baitshops, and line our grocery shelves.

The raising of aquaculture products for food, stocking, recreation and bait generate employment in rural areas, economic activity, and taxes to local, county and state government. Most fish farmers adhere to Best Management Practices (BMPs) that were developed at the national level over the course of several years. These BMPs, along with low phosphorus feed and new technologies, have been successful in allowing fish farmers to raise their fish in an environmentally friendly way.

During the hearing, a number of fish farmers from across the state shared their stories. Although most of the fish farmers who were present have very different facilities and grow different types of fish, one consistent theme was made evidently clear from testimony - the rules and regulations currently in place are making it hard for fish farmers to stay in business.

We heard from a fish farmer in Northern Wisconsin who has been growing fish for 60 years that has been struggling to obtain a permit for the last seven years. Roadblock after roadblock has slowed his progress. We also heard from fish farmers from Southwestern Wisconsin who shared their 13 year struggle to obtain the correct permits even though they have been operating for decades.

It is important to understand that aquaculture is essentially agriculture. Both industries grow products for market, however, under current law the two are treated very differently. Senate Bill 493 makes sure that aquaculture is consistently defined throughout the statutes as agriculture. The purpose of the bill is to ensure that aquaculture is fairly regulated as compared to traditional agriculture. The bill requires the DNR to enforce water quality standards consistent with federal law and guidelines. This way, aquaculture in Wisconsin will be on a level playing field with aquaculture in other states and won't be at a competitive disadvantage. I believe it is important that fish farmers in Wisconsin be given a little more regulatory certainty and an even playing field. States like North Carolina, Ohio, and Indiana have all grown their industry in the past eight years, but Wisconsin has lost 2.5 percent and we have dropped from 22nd to 26th in total market share.



(From L to R: Peter Fritch - Rushing Waters Fisheries, Tim Winkle - Silver Moon Springs, Sen. Tom Tiffany, Ron Johnson - Retired UW-EX Aquaculture Specialist, Dave Gollon - Gollon Bait & Fish Farm, Jim Augustyn, Tim Gollon - Gollon Bait & Fish Farm)

I would like to thank Tim Winkle and Jim Augustyn (both from the 12th Senate District!), and the rest of the individuals from the Aquaculture industry who made their way to Madison on Tuesday to support this bill.

There were two other bills that received a public hearing on Tuesday. The first bill, Senate Bill 444, had to do with allowing a person to shoot to kill an animal wounded by certain hunters. Essentially, this bill would allow an adult to shoot and kill an animal that has been fatally wounded by a youth. The other bill, Senate Bill 298, would codify in statute that a visually impaired individual could apply for trolling permits.

Bills voted on and passed in Committee:

- [Senate Bill 147](#) - relating to unattended decoys left in water
- [Senate Bill 338](#) - relating to interfering with hunting, fishing, trapping (also known as hunter harassment bill)
- [Senate Bill 354](#) - relating to funding for the Florence Wild Rivers Interpretive Center
- [Senate Bill 359](#) - relating to a trapping mentorship program
- [Senate Bill 435](#) - relating to the sale, purchase, or possession of wild game bird feathers
- [Senate Bill 436](#) - relating to lake monitoring and protection grants
- [Senate Bill 301](#) - relating to eliminating age requirements for participating in the hunting mentorship program
- [Senate Bill 289](#) - relating to back tag requirements

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## DNR's Outdoor Report

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Ice and snow conditions continue to vary widely across the state. Some smaller northern lakes have been frozen over longer than some of the larger lakes. Trout Lake in Vilas County finally froze over this week, but some of the other

larger lakes still had small areas of open water or ice thickness in the 1- to 2-inch range. Many lakes in the south remain open or have just minimal ice cover.

The entire state is snow covered, but snow depths range from just 2 to 3 inches in the south, to 8 to 10 inches in areas of the far north. Snowmobile trails are open or partially open in the northern tier counties and in some central counties, but conditions are generally poor to fair, with a couple counties reporting fair to good conditions on the Department of Tourism [Snow Conditions Report](#).

Cross-country ski trails are open across much of the state, including most state parks and forests. However, conditions vary, with many properties in the south not being able to set track. Snow is in north and rain in the south is forecast for late this week, and the much colder temperatures for next week, so conditions could change.

A candlelight ski scheduled for this Saturday, Jan. 9 at Lake Kegonsa State Park has been cancelled and rescheduled for Feb. 13. A decision on whether to hold a candlelight ski at Kohler-Andrae State Park on Saturday will be made after park staff can evaluate the change of conditions from any rain or snow the park receives this week. Check the "[candlelight](#)" event listing on DNR website or call the park for updates.

On lakes with ice in the north, walleye action has been sporadic. Northern pike have provided some action for the walleye anglers during slow periods. Panfish anglers haven't really been out in any numbers yet.

In the south, anglers have been fishing on Lake Wisconsin but action has been slower with some panfish, northern pike and bass caught. Colder temperatures are finally creating a layer of ice along the east shore of Lake Winnebago and ice is starting to form on southeastern Lake Michigan harbors and tributaries. Brown trout and occasional steelhead are being caught at the Port Washington harbor and an occasional brown trout was caught at the Milwaukee River and harbor.

This week wildlife biologists around the state are counting waterfowl and eagles as part of the mid-winter waterfowl survey and eagle survey. Biologists counted high numbers of Canada geese, large rafts of dabbling ducks, mostly mallards, and diving duck species including goldeneyes, buffleheads, mergansers and scaup, on larger open waters and on Lake Michigan.

Even though many winter enthusiasts would like to see more snow, wildlife biologists have noted that the mild winter has helped the deer population. Deer were still eating greens into December. Some large bucks with antlers still attached are still being seen. The weasel and snowshoe hare heaved a sigh of relief this past week as they no longer stick out like a sore thumb in the snowy landscape.

Winter birds including snow buntings, lapland longspurs, rough-legged hawks, common redpoll, pine siskin and snowy owls have been seen in the Horicon Marsh State Wildlife Area.

### **Woodruff DNR Service Center area**

Oneida County - Anglers have begun venturing onto the ice and fishing, however ice conditions vary tremendously. Ice thickness has been reported anywhere from eight inches to 1.5 inches, so extreme caution should be used. The bite has been somewhat slow for panfish but walleyes have been doing okay. - Tim Ebert, conservation warden, Woodruff

Northern Highland-American Legion State Forest - The weasel and snowshoe hare heaved a sigh of relief this past week as they no longer stick out like a sore thumb in the snowy landscape, but are just "eyes" peering as they forage and travel about. If the northern forest snow level stays the same, one can hike just about anywhere without snowshoes. It is a great time of the year to get out and observe the wild without having to be on a trail. There is probably enough snow to ski whether groomed or not. You can snowshoe or use hiking boots anywhere as well (except on groomed ski trails of course). The lakes are still freezing for ice blading. Small Lakes have a little too much

snow for blading, but skiing, hiking or snowshoeing on them is great. Ice fisher people are out there too. The larger lakes are really fun for blading as there is some really smooth ice to be found. Good idea to ask someone who knows the area. Colder weather and lack of snow has resulted in the ground starting to freeze and lake ice forming. The larger lakes just froze over last week and Trout Lake several days ago. Lakes being frozen the complete distance across, does not mean they are safe. Predicted single digit highs next weeks should improve ice conditions significantly. There is currently 3-4 inches of snow in the woods around Trout Lake with higher amounts as you venture north. The rivers and streams on the Northern Highland American Legion State Forest are running higher than normal but should return to average levels in a few weeks as the ground freezes and precipitation occurs as snow instead of rain. - Kimberly Krawczyk, Visitor Services Associate

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## Scholarships Available

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Applications for the Cellcom scholarships are now open. Cellcom will award 16 \$750 scholarships to high school seniors across its service area.

Scholarship recipients will be selected on the basis of academic record, potential to succeed, leadership and participation in school and community activities, honors, work experience and an essay on community impact. Financial need is not considered.

Applicants, however, must reside within a county in Wisconsin where Cellcom operates and be planning to enroll in a fulltime undergraduate course of study at an accredited two- or four-year college, university or technical school.

The applications are due March 21. Interested students can visit [www.cellcom.com/events](http://www.cellcom.com/events) for more information.

Also, Wisconsin Public Service Foundation is accepting scholarship applications from students who live within the company's service area and plan to attend technical or four-year college programs. A one year honoree scholarship of up to \$1,500 is awarded based upon outstanding academic achievement, leadership in school and community activities and financial need. Applying is easy.

For more information regarding available scholarships, and for an on-line application, visit <http://www.wisconsinpublicservice.com/company/scholarships.aspx>. High school students can visit their guidance counselors for additional information.

Timeline for Applications:

- 4-year College scholarships due February 1, 2016
- Agribusiness/Forestry scholarships due February 1, 2016
- Technical college scholarships will be accepted from March 1 to April 15, 2016

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## Calendar of Events

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### Upcoming Events

Start Date		Location
January 8	<a href="#">Comedy Night</a>	Merrill
January 8	<a href="#">Community Blood Drive</a>	Tomahawk



January 8 - 10	<a href="#"><u>Vintage World Championship Snowmobile Derby</u></a>	Eagle River
January 9	<a href="#"><u>AMVETS Post 724 Annual Ice Fishing Tournament</u></a>	Tomahawk
January 14 - 17	<a href="#"><u>AMSOIL World Championship Snowmobile Derby</u></a>	Eagle River
January 14 - 16	<a href="#"><u>Women on Snow</u></a>	Lakewood
January 16	<a href="#"><u>Merrill Ice Drags</u></a>	Merrill
January 17	<a href="#"><u>Broomball Tournament</u></a>	Antigo
January 23	<a href="#"><u>Great Northern Ice Fishing Tournament</u></a>	Phelps
January 23	<a href="#"><u>Merrill Winterfest Sled Dog Race</u></a>	Merrill
January 29 - 31	<a href="#"><u>Women on Snow Weekend &amp; Tour</u></a>	Eagle River
January 30	<a href="#"><u>Blindfold Snowmobile Races</u></a>	Phelps
January 30	<a href="#"><u>Fibber's Annual Ice Fishing Tournament</u></a>	St. Germain
January 30	<a href="#"><u>Ice Cold Beer Fest</u></a>	Minocqua
January 30	<a href="#"><u>Langlade County-Wide Snowmobile Ride</u></a>	White Lake
February 3 - 4	<a href="#"><u>Annual Groomer Show</u></a>	St. Germain
February 5 - 7	<a href="#"><u>Labatt Blue US Adult Pond Hockey Championship</u></a>	Eagle River

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As always, if you have any comments or thoughts regarding the subjects of this e-update, please feel free to contact me.

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